

Fifth Edition

# WRITING SKILLS FOR TECHNICAL STUDENTS

*Delaware Technical and  
Community College*



# Writing Skills for Technical Students

Fifth Edition

Delaware Technical & Community College

English Department, Jack F. Owens Campus



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# To The Teacher

This text is designed for the adult learner who needs a review of grammar and writing skills in order to be able to write clearly and concisely on the job. Its format provides for diagnosis, instruction, and practice in 15 self-paced modules that can be adapted to both individualized and classroom methods. There are 12 grammar modules, a module on paragraph writing, a module on report writing, and a module on business letter writing. Each module consists of a statement of behavioral objectives followed by instruction and practice in small segments with immediate feedback. The examples used throughout are geared to be meaningful and relevant, particularly for technical students. The fundamental principles applied are as follows:

1. Test—find out what the students already know.
2. Teach—explain to them the concepts they need to know.
3. Retest—check to see that they have mastered the objectives. (If not, repeat the procedure.)

The underlying philosophy is that writing skills are built inductively; that is, students learn and practice correct grammar and usage first, then go on to build from the sentence to the paragraph to the report to the business letter.

The materials included in the Instructor's Manual are vital to an effective utilization of *Writing Skills for Technical Students*. The manual contains diagnostic tests for the grammar units so that you can pretest and exempt students from modules they can already apply. Also included in the manual are four module tests and two editing tests for each grammar module, final grammar tests, applied writing exercises, and extra worksheets for practice when the student does not master the instructional material.

For use with the paragraph, report, and business writing modules, the Instructor's Manual includes checklists to be used by both students

and instructors to proofread and evaluate writing assignments and to note the kinds of errors made.

We believe the organization and modular format of this text will provide instructors with a flexible and effective approach to teaching students how to write well.

# To The Student

This book presents a self-paced, modularized program to build your skills in grammar and writing. It is divided into two sections. Section One deals with the basic points of grammar and the writing of paragraphs. Section Two covers additional areas in the refinement of grammar plus the writing of reports and business communications.

*Here's how to use the book.* For each grammar module that your instructor requires you to complete, first read the objectives and study the instructional materials. Follow the directions for each Activity. At the end of each Activity, you are directed to check your responses in the Feedback section at the end of the module. You will also be directed how to proceed after completing the Activity. When you have completed the module, ask your instructor for Test A. If you pass Test A, you will be given an Applied Writing exercise. If you do not pass, your instructor will review your errors, give you a worksheet for extra practice if necessary, and then give you Test B. After you pass a test on each module, be sure to note it on your Student Progress Record (see next page).

The Paragraph Module progresses from the topic sentence to the outline to the writing of four important types of paragraphs. Follow the procedures indicated, checking your work with your instructor when required.

After completing Section One, you will proceed in the same manner through Section Two.

Many students have been helped by the materials and methods in this book. We hope you will find it both useful and enjoyable.

# STUDENT PROGRESS RECORD

## Section One

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

### GRAMMAR MODULES

	Tests:	A	B	C	D	Applied Writing	Review
1. Verbs							
2. Adjectives & Adverbs							
3. Phrases							
4. Nouns / Possessive Nouns							
5. Subject-Verb Agreement							
6. Pronouns							
7. Sentence Patterns							
8. Punctuation							
9. Fragments & Run-Ons							

*Grammar Final* A \_\_\_\_\_ B \_\_\_\_\_

### 10. Paragraph Module

	A	B	Comments
Reasons			
Reasons & Examples			
Pro & Con			
Process			
<i>Paragraph Final</i>			

## Section Two

### GRAMMAR MODULES

Tests: A B C D Applied Writing Review

11. Shifts

12. Clarity

13. Acceleration


*Grammar Final* A \_\_\_\_\_ B \_\_\_\_\_

14. Report Module

A B Comments

Outlining

Technical Procedure

Persuasion

Interview Questions

Interview

Recommendation

Summary

*Report Final*


15. Business Letters

A B Comments

Request Letter

"No" Letter

Resumé

Application Letter

Memorandum

Letter of Transmittal

*Letter Final*




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# Module 1

## Verbs

*Objective:* This module will give you a good foundation on which to build your sentences.

Upon completion of this module, you will be able:

- ❖ To recognize action and linking verbs.
- ❖ To identify helping verbs.
- ❖ To identify and to use correctly the principal parts of verbs, both regular and irregular.

The verb is the basic part of every sentence. In order to write correct sentences, you have to be able to recognize verbs. There are two types of verbs: **action verbs**, which indicate what the subject is doing, and **linking verbs**, which link the subject with another word in a sentence. Most verbs show action, and generally this type of verb is more forceful in a sentence.

The subject of the sentence is what the sentence is about. It is usually a noun or pronoun. A noun is the name of a person, place, thing, or idea. A pronoun takes the place of a noun.

## PART I: ACTION VERBS

---

Just as the name implies, *action verbs show action*. You can perform or *do* any action verb, either physically or mentally. Read the following examples and note that the verbs (printed in **bold** type) all show *an action that can be done*.

He **typed** the letter to Dr. Jones. (Physical action)

Jon **read** all of the material. (Physical action)

He **studied** every rule. (Mental action)

She **walks** to work. (Physical action)

Mary **spoke** at the meeting. (Physical action)

I **thought** about the experiment. (Mental action)

---

### ACTIVITY 1-A: Identifying Action Verbs

---

Underline the action verbs in the following sentences.

1. The architect made blueprints of the drawings.
2. The secretary typed the bid specifications this morning.
3. Mary cleaned and oiled the lathe.
4. Their computer operator entered 200 new addresses.
5. Our nurses' program assists the local hospitals with many duties.
6. The hotel offers attractive accommodations for conventions.
7. A new chemical process extracts gold economically from mining residue.
8. Police officers work long hours during civil disturbances.
9. The Help Line volunteer workers saved many lives this year.
10. The prolonged strike hurts too many farmers.

Check your responses in Feedback 1-A at the end of this module. If your responses were correct, proceed to Activity 1-C. If you missed any, do Activity 1-B.

---

## ACTIVITY 1-B: Identifying Action Verbs

---

Underline the action verbs in the following sentences.

1. The auctioneer sold many attractive items at low bids.
2. She drew the most practical plan for the apartment.
3. The DuPont Company prefers men for some secretarial positions.
4. The electrician installed a new switch on the machine.
5. One of our nurses stopped the bleeding very quickly.
6. In minutes, a computer saves hundreds of work hours.
7. After lunch, the crew assembled the surveyor's level.
8. The Ramada Inn hotel chain sold its Denver branch.
9. Bill transferred to the hospital emergency ward.
10. Doris aligned her truck's front wheels this morning.

Check your responses in Feedback 1-B at the end of this module. If your responses were correct, proceed to Part II. If you missed any, review Part I before continuing.

---

## PART II: LINKING VERBS

---

Verbs that do not show action are called *linking verbs*. Only a few verbs are in this category: verbs of being (**to be, to become**, etc.) and verbs of the senses (**to feel, to smell, to taste**, etc.).

Linking verbs express some relationship between the subject and a word that follows the linking verb (see Module 2, Rule 7). The word following the linking verb may be an *adjective* (a word that describes a noun or pronoun). Its function is to describe the subject of the sentence.

S                      Adj  
John **is** efficient.

S                      Adj  
They **are** late.

S                      Adj  
Mary **was** tired.

S                      Adj  
The test **seems** easy.

The word following the linking verb may also be a noun that re-names or identifies the subject. The linking verb acts as an equal sign when the subject and the noun following the verb are one and the same.

S                      Noun  
Joe **is** my brother.  
Joe = brother

S                      Noun  
Mary **is** class president.  
Mary = president

The most common linking verb is the verb **to be** in all its forms: **be, am, is, are, was, were, been, being.**

In addition, the following are linking verbs used to express a state of being: **become, grow, seem, act, appear, stay, remain.**

Finally, these five verbs are linking verbs when used in connection with the senses: **look, feel, smell, taste, sound.**

Be careful. Some verbs, especially verbs of the senses, are linking verbs when used in one way, but they are action verbs when used in a different way. You can test the function of the sense verbs by substituting a form of the verb **to be** in their place.

### Linking Verb Test

To test whether or not a verb is a linking verb, substitute **is** or **was** for the verb and see if the sentence still makes sense.

The assignment **seems** difficult. (Can you substitute *is* for the verb *seems*? Yes. The assignment *is* difficult. *Seems* is a linking verb.)

The cake **tasted** good. (Can you substitute *was* for the verb *tasted*? Yes. The cake *was* good. *Tasted* is a linking verb.)

The following verbs are used as linking verbs. Here the subject is not doing the action of the verb.

This book **looks** good. (The book is not looking. The book *is* good.)

The pie **tastes** delicious. (The pie is not tasting. The pie *is* delicious.)

This record **sounds** scratched. (The record is not sounding. The record *is* scratched.)

The farmer **grows** tired. (The farmer is not growing; he *is* becoming tired.)

The verbs below are used as action verbs. They show what the subject is doing.

He **looks** for the memo. (Not “He *is* the memo.”)

He **tastes** wine as a hobby. (Not “He *is* wine.”)

The foghorn **sounds** a blast. (Not “The foghorn *is* a blast.”)

The farmer **grows** cabbages. (Not “The farmer *is* cabbages.”)

### LINKING VERBS

#### *Verbs of Being*

All parts of **to be**: **be, am, is, are, was, were, been, being.**  
**become grow seem act appear stay remain**



**look      feel      smell      taste      sound**

---

**ACTIVITY 1-C: Identifying Linking Verbs**

---

Underline the linking verbs in the following sentences.

1. Hog production is second only to poultry production on the Delmarva Peninsula.
2. His typing is the neatest in the office.
3. We are proud of our nursing program.
4. The account appeared complete.
5. The sign on the building seemed too tall for its setting.
6. Many activities for young people are challenging.
7. All the electrical circuits seem to have adequate power.
8. The news reporter remained calm during the interview.
9. Most meals at the plant cafeteria taste delicious.
10. The air-conditioned rooms felt good today.

Check your responses in Feedback 1-C at the end of this module. If your responses were correct, proceed to Activity 1-E. If you missed any, do Activity 1-D.

---

**ACTIVITY 1-D: Identifying Linking Verbs**

---

Circle the linking verbs in the following sentences. Draw one line under the subject and two lines under the noun or adjective to which it is linked.

1. In this newspaper column, one sentence is as lengthy as a paragraph.
2. Wild cherry trees seem susceptible to web-weaving insects.
3. The judge appears thoughtful.
4. Stale coffee generally tastes horrible.
5. The aroma from that restaurant smells inviting.
6. Our accountant was trustworthy.
7. This electric wire feels hot.
8. Our new generator is much more efficient.
9. I am happy with the new design.
10. He became an excellent keypunch operator in a very short time.